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ABSTRACT

This biennial report outlines many of the steps taken to improve North Carolina's system of public schools. It also outlines what actions are needed to continue the progress. Although the state has experienced rising SAT scores and a decreasing dropout rate, several challenges remain: decrease class size, provide funds for school facilities, provide teacher-development time, provide resources for up-to-date technology, and boost teacher salaries. The Department of Public Instruction's 1995-97 budget request reflects these challenges, specifically, to: (1) reduce the class size in grades K-3 and grade 10; (2) provide nurses for public schools; (3) offer advanced-placement courses and exams; (4) provide help for low-wealth schools; (5) provide support for exceptional children; (6) expand technical-preparation programs; (7) give help to low-performing school systems; (8) provide additional days of employment for staff development; (9) fund released time for participation in teacher mentoring programs; (10) provide annual leave for teachers; (11) support teaching standards; (12) fund up-to-date instructional equipment and materials; and (13) develop education accountability and student information system. (LMI)

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Challenges Opportunities Successes

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NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
BOB ETHERIDGE, STATE SUPERINTENDENT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION • JAY ROBINSON, CHAIRMAN

Challenges Opportunities Successes

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
BOB ETHERIDGE, STATE SUPERINTENDENT
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JANUARY 1995

from the State Superintendent

North Carolina schools and students are making tremendous progress. Scores of our students on the SAT continue to rise, even as the nation as a whole is losing ground. North Carolina eighth grade students led the nation in gains made in mathematics on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. North Carolina has established its own world-class, end-of-grade testing system for grades 3-8 that is making students think about and apply what they have learned. And, expectations are increasing for all students.

How has North Carolina made such progress? Certainly, there is no one individual or group who could claim credit for the improvements in student achievement, SAT scores or teacher salaries. It has taken countless numbers of people – teachers legislators, parents, staff, administrators and more – to effect the progress in public education made on behalf of our children.

As proud as I am of the strides the State has made, I am equally cautious about losing our momentum. This Biennial Report outlines many of the steps taken to improve North Carolina's system of public schools. It also outlines what is needed to continue the progress our citizens expect. I recognize and applaud the individual and collaborative efforts on the part of many dedicated and hard-working people. But North Carolina cannot sit back and admire what has been accomplished. There is still much to be done. Our goal is to prepare all students to become productive citizens of our democracy.

In the future, class sizes in elementary grades must be decreased to give children a better start and to ensure that students get the foundation they must have in reading and other basic skills. School facilities remain a major concern. Teachers must have the time to learn and practice new skills. Students and educators must have access to the limitless possibilities of technology. And all schools in North Carolina must have the resources to provide the very best education for each and every student. For our children's sake and for the future prosperity of our state, education holds the key.

Bob Etheridge

State Superintendent of Public Instruction

"The future of North Carolina is already here, in the hopes and dreams and possibilities represented by each student and young child in this state."

Bob Etheridge,
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

Challenges . . . Opportunities . . . Successes

It has been a decade of challenges and opportunities for public schools.

Ten years ago, the State of North Carolina, recognizing that its public schools offered the best opportunity for future progress, embarked on a bold and visionary education reform effort.

The last 10 years have produced a multitude of new programs, new approaches, and new directions. The Basic Education Program, Tech Prep, site-based management, performance accountability, and the revised curriculum all are bringing about changes in the face of schools today.

North Carolina and its leaders have embraced change, even in the face of those who would have maintained the status quo.

The challenge for the state today is to use new knowledge, new technology and new directions to improve public education. It is a never-ending job.

Each year, a new class of kindergartners waits at the school house door for its turn at a better future for itself and the state.

That is the challenge. That is the opportunity. That is what schools are all about, preparing students to become successful members of society.

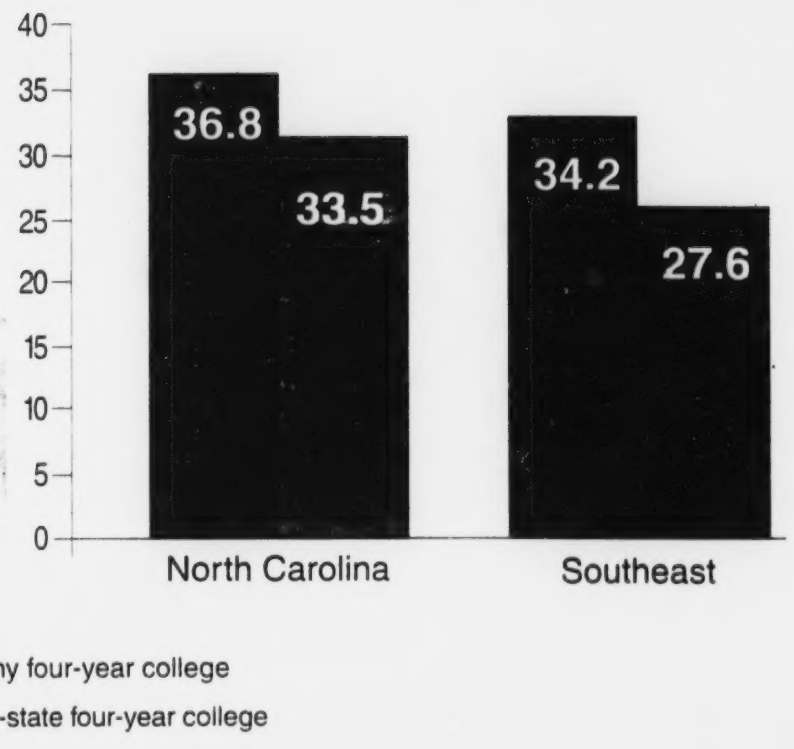
HIGHER EXPECTATIONS

North Carolina has put millions of new dollars into smaller classes, an expanded curriculum, and new tests to measure that curriculum. More children have access to counselors, social workers, school psychologists and nurses. More children are staying in school, thanks to the millions of dollars being spent on dropout prevention programs.

North Carolina's Standard Course of Study has been revised to emphasize the essential skills of an information age. Graduation requirements are catching up with workforce needs, and a new transcript will tell employers and colleges exactly what students have learned and what they are able to do.

More and more, North Carolina citizens are realizing the handicap of having a kindergarten level mind in a technological world.

Percentage of Students Attending Four-Year Colleges



PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY

As North Carolina has moved decisions about many aspects of schooling from the state to the local level, so too have programs had to change. The Basic Education Program has been redesigned to reflect the most up-to-date knowledge about teaching and learning and to allow local administrators to make decisions about its implementation.

REDUCE CLASS SIZE

Teachers say that reducing class size will help them teach even more. It just makes sense. The smaller the classes, the more time and attention teachers can devote to children. Just ask any teacher or any child.

The quality of the classroom experience for children in grades K-3 will be improved by further reducing the number of students in a class, effectively increasing the amount of time and attention a teacher can give. Students in kindergarten are getting more attention when they need it because class size has been reduced to a ratio of one teacher to 23 children. Grades 1-3 now have a ratio of one teacher to 26 children. That's a step in the right direction, but it's not enough.

More resources and smaller classes help set the foundation for a child's success. The plan to reduce class size in grades K-3 to a ratio of one teacher to 17 children is in keeping with the Department of Public Instruction and State Board of Education goal of increasing the effectiveness of schools and improving the outcomes for all students.

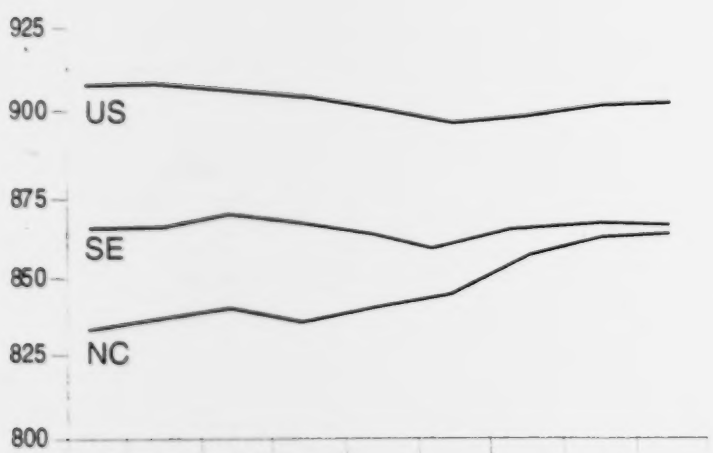
SCORES UP

All of the work and the dollars are paying off. North Carolina gains in SAT scores have led the nation over the last five years.

North Carolina students have made remarkable gains on the National Assessment of Educational Progress at the fourth and eighth grades. The dropout rate is near its lowest point in history. More students are taking advanced placement and other tough courses.

Our university system reports North Carolina students have improved dramatically over the last several years.

SAT Score Trends



	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
US	906	906	904	903	900	896	899	902	902
SE	867	867	868	866	864	862	865	867	866
NC	835	838	841	836	841	844	855	859	860

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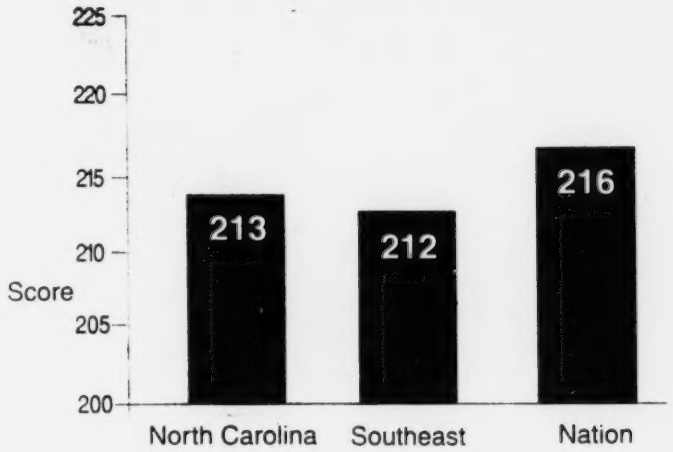
National Assessment of
Educational Progress
State-by-State Comparison

FOURTH GRADE READING

1992



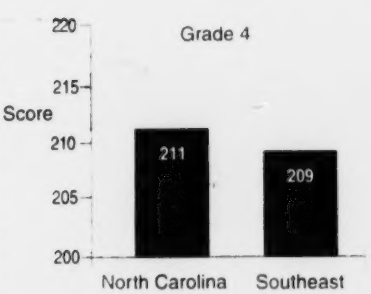
National Assessment of
Educational Progress
State-by-State Comparison

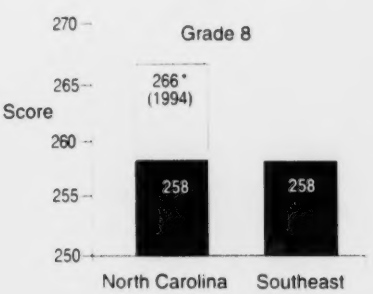
FOURTH AND EIGHTH GRADE MATHEMATICS

1992

Growth in Educational Achievement

		1990	1992	1994 (estimate)
North Carolina	Fourth Grade	N/A	211	217
	Eighth Grade	250	258	266*
Southeast	Fourth Grade	–	209	–
	Eighth Grade	254	258	–





* Note: National and Southeast scores are not available for 1994. North Carolina had ETS administer the NAEP mathematics test to eighth-graders to assess achievement. The 16 point gain from 1990 is significant.

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HELP FOR LOW WEALTH

North Carolina is a multi-faceted state.

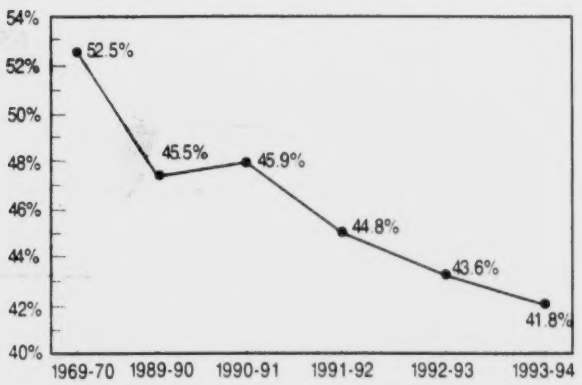
Pockets of wealth and prosperity are geographically adjacent to areas of economic distress in North Carolina. Regions that attract high-level technology and innovation coexist with areas that have not changed for decades or longer. The State supports and promotes North Carolinians from the mountains to the sea, providing resources for each county to offer every student a good instructional program. Thanks to wise legislation, counties with less than 100 percent of the state average wealth have been able to enhance their educational programs. This means that children in low wealth areas of the state can be competitive with their more affluent neighbors.

Funding for low wealth schools is helping to bring every school up to higher standards. North Carolina is doing its best to offer a good education to all children, no matter where the children live.

That is one of the reasons the state has embarked on an effort to put more money into low wealth and small school systems.

Far too many students are not achieving at the hoped-for level. And expectations are still not high enough. Students sometimes take the easy way out, or are not aware of what the work world requires. Many schools still can't afford equipment. Modern technology is often not available at many poor and rural schools.

Public Schools' Share of the General Fund



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TIME FOR TEACHER TRAINING

A lot of changes have been made in what is expected of teachers and of students. The information age is upon us. Videos, computers, CD-ROMs are a part of our society and our schools. Teaching is changing. For example, subjects such as math, reading, and science once were taught in isolation – separated from the other subjects taught in a school and separated from the outside world. Now teachers integrate subject areas and focus on predictable and unpredictable real-world situations. Students are being asked to think and to reason.

Society can't realistically expect more and more new approaches from teachers without giving them the time to learn new skills.

On-going staff development and training is important for everyone working to improve the quality of North Carolina's public schools. Teachers, administrators and staff need various workshops, seminars and courses to keep up with current thinking and best practices in the field. As important as training is, asking teachers to participate after a long day in the classroom is counter-productive and a disservice to the profession. Additional days of employment for teachers to use for training will be put to good use for the ultimate benefit of students.

Technology is a good example. Teachers can save time by using technology, but it takes time to understand it, to learn how to use it, and to practice the skill. Teachers have to have time to plan and to learn new ways of doing things. Yet, school systems cannot afford to have teachers spend time away from students.

FUNDS FOR SCHOOL FACILITIES

North Carolina is faced with more than $5 billion in school building needs. Many students sit in the same classrooms as their grandparents. But now these buildings are 50 or 60 years old. They were adequate for Grandpa, but they're not adequate today. Some are firetraps. At least two of these old buildings have burned in the last year. The frightening part is that both of these buildings were still being used by teachers and students.

The State Board of Education has recommended minimum square footage and other construction standards for classrooms, media centers, athletic facilities, art rooms, music rooms, and computer labs. School systems have willingly incorporated the Board's recommendations into their plans for renovation and new construction. But, as school systems struggle to find adequate funding for facilities, children remain in buildings that would be condemned if they were being used as prisons or for other public uses. Approximately 117,000 children are improperly housed, attending school in one of 4,500 trailers that serve as makeshift classrooms.

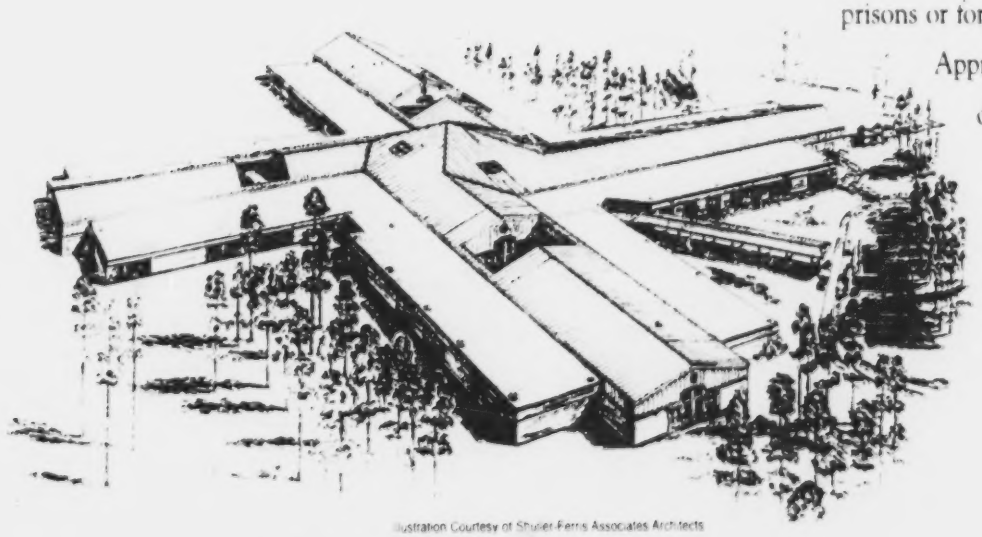

Illustration Courtesy of Stuber-Ferris Associates Architects

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At today's enrollment levels . . .

SCHOOL FACILITY NEEDS
$5,600,000,000 =
$403 per student,
per year, for 10 years.

Even schools that were built in the '60s and '70s are not really good enough for today. Most school buildings need major renovations to support educational goals.

Schools are not just places to send children 180 days a year. The state of the school buildings students use reflects the commitment to quality education.

Better facilities and better technology offer vast opportunities for teachers and schools. The 1994 General Assembly set aside $42 million for technology – funds that will be released as technology plans are developed by the schools.

"The dollar cost for school facilities will undoubtedly escalate each year these needs are left unmet. We can't even measure the toll it's taking on teachers and children."

Dr. Charles Weaver
Assistant Superintendent
Auxiliary Services

UP-TO-DATE-
TECHNOLOGY

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"Technology increases our capacity to share information and improves our ability to use student records, test scores and other data to do our jobs better – and help all students even more."

Dr. Suzanne Triplett
Assistant Superintendent
Accountability Services

Technology is more than a computer on every desk. Technology is the Information Highway that will be available to many schools in North Carolina this year. It is new ways of transferring data from individual schools and central offices to the Department of Public Instruction in Raleigh and back.

There is an unexpected side effect of technology – it is helping to highlight how one piece of the educational puzzle is connected to all of the others. That is the idea behind the design for the new Educational Accountability and Student Information system, EASI, putting it all together for teachers, for principals, for legislators, and ultimately for students. When this new computerized instruction and student record support system is in place, it will provide more information on schools, school needs, student test data and information needed to make informed management decisions.

Already, local school systems can score tests with user-friendly software that also helps develop local school improvement plans. Already, schools can find out information about student performance that also helps in making decisions about staff development needs. Already, teachers can use a test-item bank of over 8,000 test questions that are tied to the Standard Course of Study to diagnose specific needs of individual children.

It's not enough to have good pieces of the education puzzle. They must be connected.

BOOST SALARIES

At the heart of education are the people who work with children every day. Teachers, principals, counselors, food service personnel, bus drivers and other school employees are committed to giving their all for children.

Teacher and principal salaries got a boost in the last session of the General Assembly. But compensation for these dedicated employees still lags behind many other states. North Carolina's teachers' salaries currently rank 37th in the nation. The commitment to improving salaries must be made as the state continues to ask for higher and higher achievement and performance of those who work with children.

Average Teacher Salaries

Southern Regional Education Board States •1993-94 and 1990-94

	Average Teacher Salary 1993-94	Percent Change 1990-94
United States	$35,958	15%
SREB States	30,612	11
SREB States as Percent of U.S.	85.1%	
Alabama	28,705	13
Arkansas	27,873	25
Florida	32,020	11
Georgia	30,456	9
Kentucky	31,582	20
Louisiana*	26,350	8
Maryland	39,937	10
Mississippi	25,235	4
North Carolina	29,680	6
Oklahoma	26,749	16
South Carolina	30,190	11
Tennessee	30,037	11
Texas	30,519	11
Virginia**	33,128	7
West Virginia	30,549	34

Source: SREB Educational Benchmarks 1994, NEA Rankings of the States
* Estimated by Louisiana Dept. of Education ** NEA Estimate

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Challenges . . .
Opportunities . . .
Successes

Beyond the technology, the latest curriculum guides and beyond the test scores, are the children, the reason we have schools.

Children are why we have legislative programs for schools.

Children are why North Carolina devotes 40 percent of its general fund budget to schools.

Children are why teachers take their jobs so seriously.

Children are why the greatest challenge we face is the opportunity presented with each new young face.

Because North Carolina's children count.

1995-1997 BIENNIUM Budget Request

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Challenges
Opportunities
Successes

- **Reduce Class Size in Grades K-3**
- **Reduce Class Size in Grade 10**
- **Provide Nurses for Public Schools**

REDUCE CLASS SIZE IN GRADES K-3

The first years of school set the foundation for a child's success in school and in life. In keeping with the Department of Public Instruction's goal to "increase the effectiveness of LEAs in improving outcomes for all students," the State Board of Education believes that to effectively enact the Basic Education Program, more resources and smaller class sizes must be focused in grades K-3. This request is to provide funding to reduce class size in these grades to 17. Kindergarten classes are currently being funded at a ratio of one teacher to 23 children; grades 1-3 are funded at a ratio of one teacher to 26 children.

Resources Needed	Year 1		Year 2	
	Positions	Dollars	Positions	Dollars
Kindergarten	1,492.5	$51,719,603	1,492.5	$51,719,603
Grade 1	1,968.5	$68,214,431	1,968.5	$68,214,431
Grade 2	0	0	1,852	$64,177,356
Grade 3	0	0	1,867.5	$64,714,478
TMH	0	0	91	$3,153,423
TOTAL	3,461.0	$119,934,034	7,271.5	$251,979,291

REDUCE CLASS SIZE IN GRADE 10

Grade 10 is currently being funded at a ratio of one teacher to 28.5 students. The Basic Education Program calls for reducing class size in grade 10 to one teacher to 26 students. This request of $9,217,725 in 1995-96 and 1996-97 would complete this reduction and provide 266 teachers to public schools in each year of the biennium.

Resources Needed	Year 1		Year 2	
	Positions	Dollars	Positions	Dollars
	266	$9,217,725	266	$9,217,725

PROVIDE NURSES FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Basic Education Program provides that the allotment for nurses is one nurse for every 3,000 students. An estimated additional 200 nurses should fully fund the BEP for this category and provide additional health services for students.

Resources Needed	Year 1		Year 2	
	Positions	Dollars	Positions	Dollars
	200	$7,868,800	200	$7,868,800

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Challenges
Opportunities
Successes

- **Offer AP Courses and Exams**
- **Help for Low Wealth Schools**
- **Support for Exceptional Children**

OFFER ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSES AND EXAMS

With the State's help, more North Carolina schools are able to offer Advanced Placement courses and exams, but the State still lags behind other states in its AP offerings and in the number of students taking the AP exams. Also, students who pass the Foreign Language Proficiency Test will receive an endorsement to be included with the student's high school transcript for college level credit. Both these tests encourage students to take higher level classes; a critical need for North Carolina students.

Resources Needed	Year 1	Year 2
	$3,796,200	$4,510,440

HELP FOR LOW WEALTH SCHOOLS

Supplemental state funding is needed in many North Carolina counties with less than 100 percent of the state average wealth. These funds help low wealth systems enhance the instructional program.

Resources Needed	Year 1	Year 2
(full funding)	$25,000,000	$50,000,000

SUPPORT FOR EXCEPTIONAL AND WILLIE M. CHILDREN

Funding for handicapped, academically gifted and Willie M. children is not keeping up with the increases in students needing services. These funds would change the funding formula for handicapped from 1.6 to 2.3 times the funding of regular students, fund academically gifted at 4 percent of Average Daily Membership rather than 3.9 percent, and fund additional identified Willie M. students.

Resources Needed	Year 1	Year 2
*Total	$25,000,000	$50,000,000
*Total includes:		
Handicapped	$18,575,363	$37,150,726
Academically Gifted	$5,716,637	$11,433,274
Willie M.	$708,000	$1,416,000

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Challenges
Opportunities
Successes

- ▼ **Expand Tech Prep Programs**
- ▼ **Help for Low-Performing Systems**
- ▼ **Provide Additional Days of Employment**

EXPAND TECH PREP PROGRAMS

Funds are needed to integrate academic and vocational education, develop a career development and counseling program, purchase equipment, establish apprenticeship programs, and provide training in Tech Prep. The goal is for all students to complete a college prep or a comprehensive technical preparation that leads to a job or college.

Resources Needed	Year 1	Year 2
	$3,000,000	$6,000,000

HELP FOR LOW-PERFORMING/WARNING STATUS SCHOOL SYSTEMS

This request of $5 million will help those school systems designated as low-performing/warning status and will provide limited funds to the Technical Assistance Centers that help these systems. Funds will be used for curriculum reviews and management audits, staff development, extending teacher contracts, involving parents, and providing additional instructional support personnel.

Resources Needed	Year 1	Year 2
	$5,000,000	$5,000,000

PROVIDE ADDITIONAL DAYS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The current school calendar does not allow for sufficient training for teachers without affecting the days that students are in school. This request would provide three additional days of employment in 1995-96 and two additional days in 1996-97 for a total of five days of staff development.

Resources Needed	Year 1	Year 2
	$35,702,595	$49,983,633

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Challenges
Opportunities
Successes

- ▼ **Provide Early Employment**
- ▼ **Provide Annual Leave for Teachers**
- ▼ **Support Teaching Standards**

PROVIDE EARLY EMPLOYMENT OF TEACHERS/MENTORS

New teachers learning from experienced teachers. That is the basis for the Initial Certification Program. The State Board of Education requires school systems to participate in this program, and yet, no funds are provided. This request would fund five additional days of released time for 237 mentors/support team members and 2,370 initially certified teachers.

Resources Needed	Year 1	Year 2
	$1,531,621	$1,531,621

PROVIDE THREE DAYS ANNUAL LEAVE FOR TEACHERS

If teachers take the personal leave days they are allowed during the school term, they must pay for a substitute teacher. This request would provide funding to permit teachers the use of up to three days of annual leave during the school term.

Resources Needed	Year 1	Year 2
	$12,060,450	$12,060,450

SUPPORT NATIONAL BOARD FOR PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS

Funding of this item will help teachers who are working on the demanding certification requirements of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Leave time and bonus pay for the teachers will be offered as an incentive.

Resources Needed	Year 1	Year 2
	$759,116	$1,521,284

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Challenges
Opportunities
Successes

- **Access to Instructional Equipment**
- Develop EASI

ACCESS TO INSTRUCTIONAL EQUIPMENT

Teachers and students in many public schools have limited access to up-to-date instructional equipment and materials. Funding of this item will give local schools the flexibility and resources to purchase equipment.

Resources Needed	Year 1	Year 2
	$87,590,250	$118,862,000

DEVELOP EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY AND STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

Education Accountability and Student Information (EASI) is a proposed new student information system that ties classroom instruction support to traditional student accounting functions and the state testing program. Development and implementation of the system are proposed for the 1995-97 biennium, with full implementation by the end of 1996-97. EASI will replace the Student Information Management System and will be much broader in scope, allowing for networked workstations in the schools, at the central offices and at the state level.

Resources Needed	Year 1	Year 2
	$13,619,000	$20,971,000

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